

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CARACA 13205 091640Z

43

ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5537

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 13205

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR SOPN VE

SUBJECT: CUBANA CRASH-THE MAN WHO WAS NEITHER COP NOR CUBAN

REF: CARACAS 12667

1. RICARDO ANIBAL MORALES NAVARRETE, IDENTIFIED AS A FORMER CIA AGENT AND FBI INFORMANT IN THE MIAMI PRESS LAST MONTH, BECAME A VENEZUELAN CITIZEN BY NATURALIZATION ON JUNE 25, 1976. AN INTERIOR MINISTRY SPOKESMAN STATED THIS NOVEMBER 5 AND, IN FACT, MORALES' NAME DOES APPEAR IN A LIST OF NATURALIZED CITIZENS PUBLISHED IN THE GOV OFFICIAL GAZETTE ON JUNE 25. THE INTERIOR SPOKESMAN ADDED THAT MORALES ENTERED VENEZUELA FROM MIAMI ON MARCH 13, 1974, AS A BUSINESS CONSULTANT USING A NON-IMMIGRANT VISA STAMPED IN AN EMERGENCY PASSPORT ISSUED BY THE GOV. DURING THE NEXT TWO YEARS HE MADE SEVERAL TRIPS ABROAD. SOME SIX WEEKS PRIOR TO HIS NATURALIZATION, MORALES BECAME A PERMANENT RESIDENT OF VENEZUELA ON MAY 17, 1976.

2. MORALES FIRST CAME TO PUBLIC ATTENTION HERE ON OCTOBER 21, 1976, WHEN TWO U.S. BASED JOURNALISTS, HILDA INCLAN OF THE MIAMI NEWS AND TAYLOR BRANCH OF ESQUIRE, RECOGNIZED HIM IN A GROUP OF
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 13205 091640Z

DISIP (INTERIOR MINISTRY SECURITY SERVICE)

REPRESENTATIVES MEETING FOUR INVESTIGATORS FROM THE DADE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE AT MAIQUETIA AIRPORT. WHEN APPROACHED BY THE REPORTERS, MORALES DENIED BEING MORALES AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER DEPARTED THE AIRPORT. THE REPORTERS CLAIMED IN STORIES APPEARING IN THE MIAMI PRESS THAT THEY, ALONG WITH A THIRD JOURNALIST, JOHN ROTHCHILD, WERE AWAKENED EARLY THE FOLLOWING DAY AT THEIR HOTEL BY MORALES AND A SQUAD OF DISIP AGENTS WHO SUMMARILY TOOK THEM BACK TO THE AIRPORT AND EXPELLED THEM FROM THE COUNTRY (SEE REFTEL FOR FULL ACCOUNT). SUBSEQUENT AP STORIES OUT OF MIAMI REPORTED THAT THE THREE JOURNALISTS HAD BEEN EXPELLED FROM VENEZUELA AFTER RECOGNIZING A FORMER CIA AGENT AND FBI INFORMANT AS SECOND IN COMMAND OF VENEZUELAN INTELLIGENCE.

3. THE GOV'S FIRST REACTION WAS TO STONEWALL; DISIP SOURCES DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE JOURNALISTS' EXPULSION. THE FOLLOWING DAY, OCTOBER 23, UNOFFICIAL INTERIOR MINISTRY SOURCES CONFIRMED THAT MORALES HAD WORKED FOR ONE OF THE VENEZUELAN SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS, BUT THAT HE HAD NOT ORDERED THE EXPULSION OF THE JOURNALISTS. FINALLY, ON OCTOBER 25, AN INTERIOR MINISTRY PRESS RELEASE DENIED THAT MORALES WAS THE SECOND MAN IN CHARGE OF VENEZUELAN INTELLIGENCE SINCE "HE DOES NOT EVEN WORK IN DISIP." SUBSEQUENT ARTICLES IN THE U.S. PRESS REPORTING THE PRESENCE OF ANTI-CASTRO CUBANS IN VENEZUELAN SECURITY AGENCIES HAS LED TO REPEATED DENIALS BY INTERIOR MINISTER OCTAVIO LEPAGE THAT THERE ARE ANY CUBANS ASSOCIATED WITH VENEZUELAN POLICE ORGANIZATIONS.

4. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH THE EMBASSY WAS AWARE PREVIOUSLY THAT MORALES HAD BECOME A VENEZUELAN CITIZEN, THE RECORD HAS NOW BEEN SET STRAIGHT PUBLICLY. WE DID NOT PREVIOUSLY KNOW THAT MORALES TRAVELLED TO VENEZUELA ON MARCH 13, 1974, USING AN EMERGENCY VENEZUELAN PASSPORT. THE FACT THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 13205 091640Z

MORALES ENTERED VENEZUELA ONE DAY AFTER THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ MAY BE A COINCIDENCE BUT IS WORTHY OF NOTE. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, MORALES WORKED IN A SECURITY OFFICE ATTACHED TO THE PRESIDENCY. WHEN THE HEAD OF THAT OFFICE, GEN. RAUL GIMENEZ GAINZA, WAS NAMED DISIP DIRECTOR IN AUGUST 1976, THAT OFFICE MOVED OVER TO DISIP WITH HIM.

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